MODERN MAGIC.

"That," said the Father, pointing to the portrait in an illustrated paper, "is Dr. Holbank, who wrote so many schoolbooks. It should be of interest to you."

"Did he write 'Holbank's Arithmetic'?" asked the Boy.

"Yes."

"May I have the picture?"

"Certainly—glad to see you taking an intelligent interest in your work. You can cut it out." The Boy was of untidy appearance and sallow complexion. He possessed at school among his fellows a reputation for mystery which he thoroughly enjoyed. He did not attempt to maintain it in the more critical and sceptical atmosphere of his home. His name was Williams—Charles Williams; Smith, aged eleven, fully believed in him; Thompson, aged thirteen, had admitted there might be something in it.

. . . . . .

As they entered school Charles Williams carefully abstained from speaking to Smith, but pressed a note into his hand.

"What's up?" said Smith, not being entirely ready for mystery at the moment.

Williams put one finger warningly to his lips and passed on. Smith opened the note. It was inscribed outside: "H. Smith, esq. Secrit and Private." Inside it ran:

"See me imeadiately after school on a urgent mater of business. Your help is neaded. (Signed) C. Williams."

. . . . . .

Up the street from the school, down by the left to the end of the town, went C. Williams and H. Smith. It was a winter afternoon, and dark. C. Williams paused before a house in process of building, standing alone on the outskirts. The workmen engaged on it had gone.

"This is the place," said Williams. "Follow me. No; wait until the lantern is ready." He produced a small lantern from his pocket and lit it. "Now we're ready. Ask no questions."

"Shan't we be copped?" asked Smith.

"Who's to cop us?" replied the dauntless and mysterious one.

By means of a ladder they made their way to the first floor, which was still in the skeleton stage. Smith found the ladder good.

"This is rather sport," he said.

"It won't be sport for some one else when I've finished. Be careful—one false step and you're dashed to atoms."

They seated themselves side by side on a rafter, and Smith produced his portrait of Dr. Holbank.

"Do you know who that is?"

"No."

"It's the man who wrote the arithmetic. I've been on his track for years, and now I've got him."

"What are you going to do?"

"Kill him; you're to help me. No one will ever know. It's going to be done by magic—the way they used to do in the old days."

"I don't see what you mean."

"See these pins?"

"Well?"

"Have you got anything against the man? Have you ever been 'kept in' for arithmetic?"

"Twice last week. And my answers were right and the answers in the book were wrong."

"Take these pins and dig them into the two eyes of the picture. That's right; now he's blind."

"Why?"

"Whatever we do to the picture happens to the real man. I'm going to dig a pin into the forehead myself. That's where the brain is, and it'll send him mad. That'll teach him to lay traps for us; that'll teach him recurring decimals."

"I say, do you think we ought to do this?"

"You don't know any more about revenge than a child. I've been on this man's track for—Said that before? Oh, yes, so I did. How many horses does it take to plough a field in ten days if one of the horses is a goat? I'll teach him to ask questions like that! This one is in his heart." And another pin perforated the centre of the watch chain in the portrait. "Now he's dead."

"I say," said Smith, aghast, "isn't this rather going it? I mean, if it's real."

"It's real enough. To make quite certain, if you'll open the lantern I'll burn that portrait. Not a word to anybody, mind; this is a hanging business if we're caught."

"You might have told me that before. If I believed it"—

"You'll believe it all right when you hear he's dead. Come on—down the ladder. I'll see if any of the police are waiting for us—you stand back." He peered out cautiously. "Right; the coast's clear. Now then, run for your life."

"Father," said the Magician that night, "is Dr. Holbank dead?"

"Of course. He died a week ago or more. That's why they put his portrait in the paper."

"Does it say anything about him?"

"Only that he died recently—it doesn't give the date—and that he was the author of some well-known schoolbooks."

"I should like to cut that bit out, too. I want to show it to another boy."

"Certainly. As I've always said, an intelligent interest in your work is what I like to see."

And C. Williams took that obituary paragraph to school two days later, and his reputation for magical powers, combined with a total want of principle, is on the increase.—(Barry Pain, in Black and White.

THE CHEERFUL IDIOT.

From The Indianapolis Journal.

"I see," said the shoe clerk boarder, "that there is a king in Africa who has been drunk for fifteen years."

"That," said the Cheerful Idiot, "is what might be called a soaking reign."

SPOILED THE DINNER FOR HIM.

From The Detroit Free Press.

"Bluest Thanksgiving I ever spent?" mused the fine old gentleman who has an unconquerable antipathy to practical politics. "It stands out in my memory like an obelisk on a plane, and it was not so very long ago, either.

"I had been induced that fall to run for an important public office. It was done against my better judgment and under great pressure, but when a man enters such a fight he wants to win. I was in a close district and determined to put up the very best fight that the circumstances would permit. I advertised at once for an extra stenographer and, from the many who responded selected a beautiful, bright and dashing young woman who justified my immediate faith in her ability. She did all my private correspondence, knew as much about the inside of the campaign as I did, worked day and night with a willingness that was surprising and even took from one of my shrewdest advisers the list of voters in the strongest section with which I had to contend, with full instructions as to how the most influential persons among them could be won to my cause. It was great work and yet I fell several hundred short of the normal party vote.

"My successful opponent lived in a neighboring town and graciously invited me to be his guest on

HIS BEST EFFORT.

"I HOPE YOU MUST FORGIVE ME FOR BEING SO UNENTERTAINING TO-NIGHT, MR. SOFTLY, BUT I'VE HAD SUCH A COLD ALL DAY, AND I'M ALWAYS SO STUPID WHEN I HAVE A COLD."
HE (BEGINNING TO BE GALLANTLY CONSOLATORY): "WELL, I ASSURE YOU I SHOULD NEVER HAVE NOTICED IT IF YOU HAD THE LEAST COLD."—Punch.

the following Thanksgiving. It would have looked slimly to refuse, and I went. It was really an admirable social function, but the few hours I put in there were torture. The host met me with a hearty handclasp. Turning he said: 'My wife, Resplendent in satin and jewels, I saw my stenographer. 'Love and war,' she murmured. 'He thinks I was visiting my old home in New-England.' I held my peace, but that fatted turkey tasted like cork."

AMARANTHA CALLED OFF.

From The Detroit Free Press.

That social distinctions are the result of cultivation was forcibly illustrated in the very heart of Piety Hill. A bargain Saturday afternoon secured the presence there of a fine hardy-gurdy with two pretty daughters of Italy to accompany it on their violins. Handsomely dressed children soon gathered about and enjoyed the music, while they returned the smiles of the performers.

"Heah, you Amarantha," she shouted, "come right out on dat. Whut you mean showin' you'self off 'fo dis heah white trash?"

CAN'T HURT A REPORTER.

From The Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

That newspaper men are full of resources was well illustrated recently. One of the craft who lives on the South Side is fond of seeing a chicken fight, and he has some good chickens. Recently he attended a cocking main, and took one of his game chickens with him. There had been several lively bouts, when a policeman appeared and gathered the crowd in. The newspaper man had hold of his chicken when the policeman arrived, and in his excitement held on to it.

At the hearing the policeman told his story, and no one denied being present or declared that the story was not true. The police magistrate turned to the newspaper man and said: "How does it come that you were there?"

The culprit looked puzzled for a moment, and then a smile broke over his face, and he said: "Why, you know I am always after news. I heard about this main, and got a tip that it was going to be raided, and I went there to get the news."

"That's all right," said the magistrate, "but what were you doing with a chicken in your hand?"

The newspaper man hesitated but an instant, and said: "Well, you see, I wanted to clinch my news item as being true, so I just grabbed the chicken to show there was a chicken fight."

The magistrate looked at him a moment, and said: "Well, you'll do. You are discharged."

ASKING THE IMPOSSIBLE.

"I WOULD LIKE A REAL PRETTY PORTRAIT—A GOOD LIKENESS."
"WELL, MA'AM, YOU'LL HAVE TO DECIDE WHICH YOU'LL HAVE."—(Fliegende Blätter.

In the midst of the proceedings a little colored girl came rushing down the street, her open jacket flying straight from the shoulders and her rakish hat on the back of her head. She had hardly stopped before her feet began to beat time upon the stone sidewalks, while her eyes glowed with admiring pleasure. Presently the inspiration became irresistible and she went whirling gracefully in an impromptu dance. There was a dainty little girl with long golden curls, pink and white face and big blue eyes who wanted some of the same kind of sport. She tripped to the colored danseuse, threw her arms about her and the pair stepped merrily to the music that came out stronger and faster for their especial benefit. Carriages drew up on the asphalt, men on their way from business stopped and faces peered from every window in the neighborhood. There was applause and laughter, while the man at the hurdy-gurdy was reaping a harvest.

As the festivities were at their height a pondering old aunty from whom the colored girl had evidently taken sudden leave further up the street appeared under full sail.

ALL FOR THE LITTLE ONE.

From The Cleveland Leader.

They were sitting before a blazing log that lay in the big, wide colonial fireplace. After a long silence she asked:

"Do you ever see pictures in the leaping flames?"

"Yes," he said, in low, earnest tones; "do you?"

"Sometimes," she sighed. "What are the pictures that most often appear to you?"

"There is a maiden's face," he tremblingly returned, "that I can see when I am alone—a face with large, soulful eyes, and lips that I would give my soul to kiss."

The flame died down, and slender shreds of gray smoke curled up into the chimney. Outside, the wind shrieked and swept stray pinheads of hard snow against the panes.

She leaned over a little nearer to him and looked longingly into his face.

He was thinking of the wife who had put her arms around his neck, when she lay upon her deathbed, and made him promise never to take another in her place. He thought, too, of the motherless little one at home, in its crib, and then he looked at the sweet, wistful face that was turned toward him—the face that was ever before him in his dreams.

He arose, and she also stood up. Somehow her little fingers had found their way into his hands.

The wind moaned as if it had been the voice of a lost soul. A shiver passed over him from head to foot, and he looked around as if he expected to see the reproachful face of his dead wife—but she wasn't there.

So, in time, the little one in the crib at home was taken in hand by a stepmother, and the wind ceased to have a monopoly of the shrieking business in those parts.

WINNING A WOMAN'S LOVE.

ALGERNON PERKENHAM TRIED A NEW RECIPE WITHOUT MARKED SUCCESS.

From The Cleveland Leader.

Algernon Perkenham had for a long, long time loved Alice d'Orsay fervently—almost madly; but she had not seemed to return his passion with the enthusiasm that he could have wished. As a matter of fact, she had always seemed to become intensely interested in horses or golf or the latest novel whenever he had begun to verge upon the subject of love. This had disagreed with the digestion and, consequently, the spirits of Mr. Perkenham. He quit hanging around the stage doors; cared nothing for the stories that were told at his club, and aroused the anxiety of his mother.

One day he got hold of a book in which he read that the surest way to win a woman's love was to appear indifferent to her; to treat her as if she were unworthy of being taken seriously, and to dispute everything that she said.

Algernon Perkenham's heart gave a mighty leap when he read this, insomuch that his tonsils were almost knocked from their foundations.

"I'll begin to-night," he said to himself. "I'll make her think that I look upon her as the dust beneath my feet—I'll paralyze her!"

So that evening he called at the d'Orsay palace, for, as he told his friends, he "had the ongtray there," the Perkenhams and the d'Orsays being mutually interested in the stock yards business.

The beautiful girl swept into the drawing-room after the young man had waited half an hour, and exclaimed:

"Oh, good evening, Mr. Perkenham. I'm so glad to see you. It's a beautiful evening, isn't it?"

He threw one leg over the other, yawned and replied:

"Oh, I dun-no. It ain't so warm."

"Warm?" she replied, in some surprise. "No, it isn't too warm. It's just nice."

"Think so? Seems beastly to me."

"Why," Miss d'Orsay said, as she sat down in a chair that was plenty large enough for two, "you seem to have a grudge against the world this evening. I hope it is not because I had to keep you waiting? I assure you I couldn't help"——

"Oh," he interrupted, "don't worry about that. I haven't any kick comin' against the world. Never felt more cheerful in my life. Fact is, I feel so good I can hardly keep from whoopin' right out. As for your keepin' me waitin', I didn't mind. I was havin' such a good time here all by myself that if you hadn't come down for an hour I don't s'pose I'd have noticed it."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, and then said:

"Your sister Lillian was telling me last week that you were not enjoying very good health. I suppose that is the reason we have not had the privilege of seeing much of you lately."

"Some folks seem to be mightily interested in the state of my health," he replied, maintaining his devil-may-care expression with some difficulty, for his impulse was to throw himself at the sweet maiden's feet and tell her that he could not live without her love. "My health has never been better'n it has been lately," he went on. "The reason I haven't called here very often is that I've had other engagements. I broke several pressin' ones just to come around this evening, for I s'posed you'd think it strange if I stayed away any longer, and I wouldn't have you worry about me for anything. Say, that's a beastly way you've got your hair done up. Makes you look forty years old. Now, if you'd wear your hair back further on your head it wouldn't make your nose seem to turn up so much at the end. If I"——

But she had suddenly risen, and, without saying anything, hurried from the room.

A moment later the butler, who weighed 187 pounds and had big fists with long tufts of hair on them, appeared in the doorway and said:

"Miss d'Orsay says to trun youse out and tell youse dat if youse ever come around here wid annudder jag she'll have youse ran in."

Three minutes must have elapsed before Algernon Perkenham was able to gather himself up at the bottom of the marble steps and limp away.

NICETY OF ETIQUETTE.

From Tit Bits.

A true gentleman usually feels that it is essential to be courteous to the least as to the greatest, but etiquette does not always recognize this. The famous Talleyrand is reported to have used a graduation of politeness in asking his guests to take beef at a dinner party that he gave. The grade ran thus:

To a prince of the blood: "May I have the honor of sending Your Royal Highness a little beef?"

To a duke: "Monseigneur, permit me to send you a little beef."

To a marquis: "Marquis, may I send you a little beef?"

To a viscount: "Viscount, pray have a little beef."

To a baron: "Baron, do you take beef?"

To an untitled gentleman: "Monsieur, some beef."

To his private secretary: "Beef?"

But there was yet an inferior personage present, and to him Talleyrand uttered no word. He simply looked at him, and made an interrogative gesture with the carving-knife. But if the meat were good, some of us would not trouble much how we were invited to it.

THOSE DEAR GIRLS.

From The Cincinnati Enquirer.

Laura—I had to give up the bicycle. I could not conquer my inclination to run people down.

Flora—Especially when their backs were turned, eh, dear?

A CLEAR CASE THERE.

From The Chicago News.

"So your uncle is going to try his flying machine to-morrow, is he? Has he made his will?"

"Yes; left everything to charity."

"That so? Well, you don't seem to be at all put out about it."

"Why should I be? Is there a court in the land that will hold a man who would monkey with a flying machine to be of sound mind?"

A NATURAL QUERY.

From The Chicago Post.

"I am getting up a little article about men of wealth," explained the reporter, as he entered the great merchant's office, "as a sort of lesson for the young men of to-day. Would you mind telling me how you got your first real start in life?"

"Not at all, not at all," replied the old man, pleasantly. "Do you want the truth, or the regulation biographical romance that is ordinarily used? It's immaterial to me."